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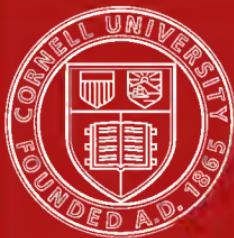
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MR. DOW'S
ELECTION SERMON.

1826

**THE DUTY OF PRAYING FOR ALL THAT ARE IN
AUTHORITY, ILLUSTRATED.**

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY

OLIVER WOLCOTT,

AND THE

HONOURABLE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,

AT THE

GENERAL ELECTION,

MAY 4, 1825.

**BY DANIEL DOW,
Pastor of the Church of Christ in Thompson.**

HARTFORD :

CHARLES BABCOCK.....PRINTER.

1825.

Fo.

At a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, holden at Hartford, in said State, on the first Wednesday of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five.

RESOLVED, That Hon. Mr. Young and S. Holmes, Esq. be a Committee to wait on the Rev. DANIEL Dow, and return the thanks of the General Assembly for his Sermon delivered before them, at the anniversary Election, and request a copy thereof for the press.

A true copy of record,

Examined by

THOMAS DAY, *Secretary.*

ELECTION SERMON.

I. TIM. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

PRAYER, in the sacred scriptures, is considered, not only as a duty, but as a duty of primary importance. So important, that no other duty can be performed without it. The man who wholly neglects prayer, will either not attempt his duty, or, if he makes a feeble attempt, will be sure to fail in it, for want of divine assistance. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts that prayer be attended to, as the first of all duties. *I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made.*

2 We are also here informed, what ought to be our leading desire and petition when we come before God in prayer. God has made it our duty, and our privilege, to pray, not only for ourselves, but for others: and he can grant an answer to our prayers on the behalf of others as well as for ourselves. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The prayer of a Moses, or of a Samuel may avert impending judgments. And the prayers of God's people may be heard, and God in answer to them, may pour out his spirit upon the nations, when the set time to favour Zion shall come. But the man of prayer is always a *benevolent* one, and desires the

greatest good. Though he has respect to his own well-being, according to its true importance, yet as his neighbour's welfare is as desirable as his own, the general welfare must be far more so : and accordingly, when he thinks of the good of the great family at large, it appears to him of so much greater importance than any private benefit that can redound to himself, he seems to be swallowed up and lost, like a drop in the vast ocean, and the leading desire of his heart, in his prayers and supplications, is for the general weal. Hence the apostle exhorts, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

3. In praying for all men, the apostle exhorts that we particularly pray for Kings, and for all that are in authority. That we should pray for the sick, the afflicted, the destitute, the widow and the fatherless, and for sinners of mankind in the general, is easy to be understood. But does it appear equally evident, that they also are special subjects of prayer, who hold the highest stations in life, and who seem so much more highly favoured than the rest of their fellow men ? Why pray for *Kings*, when they have so many subjects under their controul to minister to their wants and to their gratifications ? Or why pray for such as are in authority who may be persons of affluence and who live in so much splendour ? The apostle, however, exhorts, *first of all, that, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for Kings, and for all that are in authority.*

In discoursing on these words then, I would endeavour to show

I. Why we ought, especially, to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority ? and

II. In what manner we should pray for them.

1. We should pray for kings and for all that are in authority because they need special wisdom to direct them. Wisdom, prudence, and foresight, are always needed, whenever a person is called to transact any important business. Such wisdom, as comes from the Father of lights, and which is granted only in answer to prayer. An individual, attending to his own private concerns, has need to be divinely directed. A parent providing for the wants, and superintending the affairs of a numerous family, needs superior wisdom. But kings, and such as are in authority, have to superintend the affairs, and in some sense to provide for the wants of a whole community. Where there are not only thousands, but millions, in a state of subordination ; so many various occupations, all of which must, in their place, be consulted ; and such a variety of character and pursuit, which must in a greater or less degree claim attention ; to give direction to public measures, and to do, in all respects, what will be politically just, must undoubtedly require the highest wisdom. That body politick will be but poorly served, whose princes are children, and babes rule over them. And all civil rulers, let their natural abilities, or their acquirements, be great as they may, will be but babes in political wisdom, unless God shall see fit to give them understanding, and direct them in all their counsels. In praying, therefore, for the general good of mankind, we should pray for kings, and for all that are in authority.

2. Kings and such as are in authority are subject to peculiar temptations. All persons, indeed, are surrounded with temptations to evil. But there are some, whose temptations are more numerous, more pressing, and consequently, more dangerous, than what others are called to experience. Now they,

who stand in front of the battle, where the fiery darts of the adversary fly thickest are surely to be considered as special subjects of prayer. But this is just the situation, in which they are placed, who are promoted to high stations of honour and trust. How peculiarly liable are they, to be led away with the glare of worldly glory, and the splendour of a court, as though it were the supreme good? How prone to esteem the praise of men, more than the praise of God? How tempted to make religion subservient to their policy, instead of making their policy subservient to religion? How tempted when opportunity is presented of consulting for their own aggrandizement, to the neglect of the publick good? How tempted to make an excuse of the multiplicity of business, for casting all thoughts of God and religion out of mind? How tempted, when they have gone a certain length in the career of a vain ambition, to turn infidels, and atheists, and say there is no God, because they are afraid to believe that there is one. But at the best, the post, in which kings and such as are in authority are placed, is always the post of danger, and, therefore, as we are in duty bound to pray that God would succour, and deliver the tempted, we ought to pray for them. *I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions be made for Kings and for all that are in authority.*

3. Kings, and such as are in authority, are often involved in such circumstances, as are peculiarly trying and perplexing. Admit that they are persons of the strictest integrity. Admit that they are influenced by the purest benevolence; that they act with a single and persevering aim at the glory of God and the best good of their subjects; yet, amid the conflicts of foreign nations abroad, and contending par-

ties at home, what perplexing scenes will rise, in which even the honest and wise legislator, like the mariner in a storm, will be at his wit's end, to know what course to steer. Treaties are to be entered into with rival powers, everlastingly jealous of each other's interference ; laws are to be enacted which will deeply affect the feelings of large and respectable classes of the citizens ; the political horizon so overcast with clouds, that the most discerning politician cannot see an inch before him ; and yet all expecting that they who preside over the affairs of the nation, will keep the vessel clear of shoals and quicksands, and guide her into the port of safety. Yet, there are thousands constantly watching for faults, magnifying real ones, fancying them where there are none, while foul-mouthed slander raises her voice from one end of the kingdom, or republick, to the other, and they who sit at helm, whether they do right or whether they do wrong, are sure to be blamed. Or if there be any difference, the man of truth and integrity falls under censure, which the artful and intriguing who never sought for any thing beyond their own popularity, or emolumen', go off with applause. In such a situation as this, no one can stand more in need of the support and consolations of religion, as well as of divine direction, than the true patriot, upon whom has devolved the duty of legislation. *I exhort therefore that supplications, prayers, and intercessions, be made for kings, and for all that are in authority*

4. We should pray for kings and for such as are in authority, because, from their proceedings, very important consequences will result to the community at large. As they are acting for the whole body politick, so their administration must affect the interests of the whole, and the times may either go well, or ill,

as publick measures are either wisely, or unwisely conducted. By mal-administration, all the wheels of business may be clogged, or entirely stopped. Vice may be publickly countenanced, honest industry discouraged, and all the vicious part of the community go mad with speculation. The nation may be unnecessarily involved in war, and the country ravaged by foreign armies. Indeed it is very possible, that, through the folly of a few individuals at helm, a whole empire may be utterly ruined. While, on the other hand, by a wise and virtuous administration, industry may be encouraged, all the useful arts of life cultivated, peace preserved, both at home and abroad, and the nation conducted to the zenith of political prosperity. Such being the important consequences, which result from the conduct of civil rulers, in praying for the peace and prosperity of the nations of mankind, we shall find occasion to pray for kings and for all that are in authority.

5. Kings, and such as are in authority, may exert themselves upon a larger and more extensive scale of influence, either for, or against religion. They who are in private life will have their influence, with their children, their domesticks, their kindred, their families, their neighbours, and all with whom they have any intercourse or acquaintance. There is no man, whose influence is so small, but he may contribute something, by his example, in leading others in the way, either to heaven or hell. But they who are in high stations of authority, will, in a common course of things, have far greater influence. Their character and conduct are more extensively known. They are generally considered as men of superior discernment. And as they have already risen to a post of honour amongst men, it will always

be the case that many will not only be emulous to imitate their example, but will think themselves safe in so doing. Hence, when kings, and such as are in authority, are just men, fearing God, their example is one of the best means of restraining vice, which it is in the power of men to use, and their influence in encouraging religion and virtue is, in very deed, like showers of rain upon the tender grass, and the clear shining of the sun after the rain. Vice, when contrasted with such illustrious examples of virtue, filled either with shame, or remorse, or both, is obliged to secrete herself in the darkness of the night, or retire to the dens and caves of the earth. But when civil rulers are men of immoral conduct, and irreligious principle, the contagion of their evil example spreads far and wide. Vice, in all its forms, no longer confined to its covert, will even be ambitious of lifting its brazen, shameless front in the open light of day. And it will soon become a common plea with such as are addicted to the most flagitious crimes, that they are only copying the examples of such as are high in office. Some poor deluded sinner will plead the example of another, as though it were a sufficient excuse. The wicked will walk on every side, when the vilest of men are exalted. In praying, therefore, for the prevalence of good morals, as well as for that civil order, which is so essential to the happiness of mankind, we must not forget to pray for kings, and such as are in authority.

6. Kings, and such as are in authority, are highly responsible for their conduct. If, indeed, they never were to be called to an account, though their conduct would still have its influence, as above stated, yet, as it respected themselves, individually, they would not

be, so specially, the subjects of prayer. They might live as they list, and yet, in the judgment of the great day, be treated as a privileged order. But notwithstanding, they who are in authority are placed in a post so dangerous, and are acting a part so important and interesting, yet at that final and grand assize, they must stand upon a level with all their fellow-citizens. Then, without any laurels of distinction, without any badges of office, without any splendour of a court, without any applauses of their fellow men, to screen their vices, they must awake from the dead, and be judged by that God, who knows what all their administration has been. And, what if it then appear, that they have always been influenced by selfishness, and a love of worldly glory? What if it then appear, that instead of leading the people in the ways of godliness, they set them an example of the foulest vices? What if instead of endeavouring to use their influence in favour of religion, they always manifested their opposition against the Lord, and against his anointed? What if with all their means and advantages of knowing the truth, they die in their sins unconverted? If kings, and such as are in authority, finally come short of salvation, it must surely be more intolerable for them, than for ordinary sinners. And therefore, from a tender concern for their own eternal salvation, that they may flee from the wrath to come, we should pray for kings, and for all that are in authority.

Having thus shown it to be a duty, to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority, I would now proceed

II. To show in what manner we ought to pray for them. And

1. We should pray with a holy desire of heart. God being holy in his nature, can never do any thing in-

consistent with holiness. If, therefore, we would pray acceptably, we must pray lifting up holy hands. It will be in vain to pray that the desires of the wicked may be granted, or that a kingdom may be established by unrighteousness.

2. We should pray in faith. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him. We must believe then in that God whom the scripture reveals, and approach into his presence in the name of a mediator.

3. We should pray in the exercise of universal benevolence. Some feel interested only in that kingdom, or that dominion, to which they as individuals belong; and, accordingly, when they have expressed their patriotism, by which we are to understand their selfishness, all their prayers are ended. But the views of the apostle were not circumscribed by such geographical boundaries. He exhorts us to pray not for any particular king, or kingdom, exclusively; but for kings, for all kings, for all kingdoms, for all that are in authority, yea, for all men. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour. Christianity is no enemy to patriotism; though it does exercise a far more extensive philanthropy.

4. We should pray that all who are in authority, may be influenced by the spirit of God to prosecute the designs of benevolence, and that in this way they may be greatly prospered in their administration. If kings and all that are in authority, were only heartily engaged in the cause of truth and righteousness, what a scene of general happiness and prosperity would ensue? They would have no occasion to draw the civil sword for the propagation of religion; by the influence of their example, they would be nursing fa-

thers to the church of God, while they who might sit under their peaceful administration, would beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more. But for such desirable events as these, we must pray to that God in whose hands are the hearts of kings, and who turneth them as the rivers of water are turned.

5. We should pray that God would overrule all their errors, and all their wickedness, for his own glory, and for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The time when all kings, and all such as are in authority, shall be just men, probably, the present generation will not live to see. We are to expect that iniquity and error both, will frequently be found at the seat of judgment. Some will administer wrong, intentionally ; while the wisest and the best, will not be entirely free from mistake. But as God is able to overrule evil for good, we should pray, that all publick measures, which are not in themselves wisely calculated, may be hindered in their natural operation, and the designs of the wicked disappointed. We should pray, that all the blessings which are enjoyed under a wise administration of government, may be long continued. Or, if revolutions must come, and one empire be blotted out after another, yet, that God would cause all these overturnings to issue in the rightful reign of the Prince of Peace.

6. In praying for kings, and all that are in authority, we ought also to give thanks. We should thank God, that the kingdoms of the world, through the wickedness and the wrath of man, have not been more miserable than they are. We should thank God, for all the virtuous and the wise, that have ever been raised up to seats of power and influence ; and

we should give thanks for all the invaluable blessings that have been derived to the people, from their administration. *I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for Kings and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.*

In the review of what has been suggested, I would observe ;

1. Christianity never encourages sedition, under any regularly constituted government. In the days of Christ and his Apostles, perhaps the form of civil government was as objectionable, as it ever was, and, in many instances, badly administered. The Roman Cæsars, take them altogether, were far from gracing the catalogue of kings. They were, with very few exceptions, the worst of tyrants. But what is the course of conduct, which our Lord tells his disciples to pursue, in relation to civil government ? Does he tell them to rebel, because Cæsar was a bad man ? No. Pay Cæsar his tribute money. Render unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's ; and, unto God, the things that are God's. Only demean yourselves as the faithful followers and disciples of Christ, and God will take care of Cæsar, and punish him in his own time and way. Christianity, though it reproves the vices of kings, and calls upon the judges of the earth to be instructed, yet, it will always make orderly citizens, under every regularly constituted government.

2. We learn the proper mode of effecting a reform in government, whenever it is found needful. Some will say, if publick measures go wrong, and we may not rebel, what shall we do ? The answer is, you must pray. God is able to change the hearts of them that

are in authority. God is able to change the hearts of the people. And if he do either, all grievances will soon be redressed. The spirit of prayer and reformation, generally diffused among the people, will effect a better reform in government, and establish it upon a more permanent foundation, than could ever be effected, by an armed force. Let what revolutions will take place, the people must still be miserable, and still oppressed, so long as wickedness prevails. There is no revolution, that will have any very important effect upon the happiness of the people, unless it be a revolution in morals. Praying, therefore, is always better than sedition. But if the evils, which are suffered in the present world, are not removed; yet, the time is not far distant, when they certainly will be redressed, by him who cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. But

3. Though we are to pray for kings, and for all such as are in authority, yet, this is no reason, why we should not be thankful, for that happy constitution of Government, under which we, by the good providence of God, are placed. It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that in many parts of the world, such gross darkness covers the people, that monarchy is the only form of civil government, that is practicable. And *any* form of government, such is the depravity of apostate man, is unquestionably better than none. Suppose, beloved, from a mistaken benevolence, you were immediately to cut the throats of kings; to dissolve all those constitutions of government, which have been so long established, but which do not come up to our standard of liberty; and suppose you were to tell the people, many of whom are so ignorant that

they can neither write nor read, who know little or nothing about the concerns of their own country, and much less concerning other nations, now you shall all be free, choose your own representatives, go, form new constitutions, and govern yourselves ;—in what condition would you place them ?—In a condition far more deplorable than that in which you found them—in all the horrors of anarchy. The experiment of a republican government was tried even in France, one of the most distinguished nations of Europe, but utterly failed, because the people had neither knowledge enough, nor virtue enough, to receive it All that we have to do with kings, is to pity them, and to pray for them, that they may be disposed to rule in righteousness while their services are needed, and, that when the time shall arrive, that their subjects are prepared for the enjoyment of liberty, that they may then lay aside the robes of royalty, with a good grace, and carry peace of conscience and the consolations of religion with them, into the shades of their retirement.

But if God was pleased to make a selection of wise and virtuous men ; brought them, by a special providence to these American shores ; and through their instrumentality, laid the foundation of all the civil, literary, and religious institutions, which have prepared this nation for the enjoyment of a more perfect freedom, under a republican constitution, which, at this present time, stands forth the wonder and the envy of the world ; surely, whilst we pray for kings and such as are in authority, it becomes us to give thanks for all our distinguished privileges. And especially, when we take a review of the history of this State, from the time it was first founded down to the present ; when

we call to remembrance the long list of enlightened Christian patriots, who have filled the chair of State, under whose benign influence so much prosperity has been enjoyed, and which we still enjoy ; when we contemplate the general information which has been diffused amongst the people, and the order which has so generally prevailed, and which still prevails ; when we contemplate our present condition, and contrast it with the condition of so many others who are groaning under the iron rod of oppression, while we are sitting this day unmolested under our own vines and fig tree ; who among us all, that believes in the existence, and in the superintending providence of God, will not be constrained to admit, that, as a people, we are under peculiar obligations of gratitude ? And

4. Should we not offer our devout supplications to God, that all these distinguished privileges may be continued ? He who bestowed them upon us, is equally able to take them away. And is there not some occasion to fear that he will ? If we sought him in the day of our national calamity, and he heard our cry, and wrought deliverance for us, what may we not expect, if in the day of our prosperity we, as a nation, renounce his fear, and begin to say, "We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee ?" Or, in the language of Pharaoh, "My river is my own—and I made it for myself?" God will certainly vindicate the honour of his own great name.—Only let vice and irreligion universally prevail, of which many appear so desirous, and whose clamorous voice is so frequently heard in the public places ; let the Sabbath be generally disregarded, and the rights of Jehovah denied, by all those who are in authority ; and the time will not be long before all our happy in-

stitutions will be laid prostrate, and our Republick will be at an end. Then our boasted Constitution, the wonder of the world, will have become like a meteor of the night, that shot a momentary glare athwart the sky, and then went out in stench and darkness — And what can prevent? Nothing but the restraining grace of God. Nothing but the outpouring of his holy spirit, both upon them that rule, and upon them that are ruled.—Should we not then in our supplications beseech the God of mercy, to heal our national backslidings, and save us from self destruction?— Should not Moses, should not all our political Fathers, the Heads of our tribes, and the Representatives of the people, spread forth their hands toward heaven, while the ministers of the Lord stand between the porch and the altar, and say, “Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach.” And should not all the people say, Amen? O could this large and respectable congregation only feel as they ought to feel, were they all truly disposed to draw near to God in the exercise of fervent, effectual prayer, which always availeth much ; instead of reaping the fruits of our vanity, our levity, our impiety, and our abominations, the bottles of heaven would soon be emptied, and a blessing poured out upon us, which this house would not have room enough to contain. Oh God of mercy, let thy blessed spirit, in its enlightening, convicting, converting, sanctifying, and comforting influences descend and rest upon us. But once more.

5 If we are to pray for Kings and for all that are in authority, was there ever a time when it was more needful for Christians to attend to this important duty than at the present? When was vice ever more prevalent, among all ranks and orders of the people

throughout the whole world? When was there ever a greater reluctance manifested, to submit to those moral restraints, which every government, founded in righteousness, must impose? When did revolutions ever follow each other, in so rapid succession? And what great changes must yet take place, in the condition of States and Empires, before the glory of the millenial day, shall dawn upon this depraved world? The time is at hand when God will redeem Zion with judgment, and the battle of the great day of God Almighty is fast approaching. Never was it more difficult, for such as are in authority, conscientiously to discharge the duties of their office. Never did they stand in more need of wisdom, of grace, and of fortitude. Let all, therefore, who feel the benevolent desire to pray for the prosperity of our own beloved country, for the interests of Zion, or for the weal of mankind, pray for kings, and for all that are in authority. Pray that they all may be men of God. Pray that their counsels may be wise and their way prosperous, in the administration of general justice, and in guiding the nation in the paths of virtue, good order, and peace. May the time soon come, when all, who rule over men, shall rule in the fear of God, their subjects be all righteous, and the earth filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord.—AMEN.

